



# Elder Financial Abuse

Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

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## Emergency Scams

*A relative needs money to get out of jail. How can this be a scam?*

This scheme particularly targets seniors with grandchildren. It has been in use for years and continues to this day because it is effective.

In this scam, a caller informs the victim that a relative – often a grandchild – has been arrested and needs bond money to be released. Sometimes the caller poses as the relative, other times he/she pretends to be a police officer. The bond is usually thousands of dollars and needs to be wired immediately. In almost every instance, the victim is instructed not to tell anyone – especially the young person's parents.

By the time the victim hears from his/her actual relative, the money and the perpetrator are long gone.

Often perpetrators carry out these schemes by gleaning information from social media sites like Facebook and Twitter and using it to persuade the victim that his/her relative is truly involved.

## Warning Signs

- The caller demands that money be wired immediately.
- The caller asks you not to tell anyone.
- The caller doesn't sound like your grandchild.
- The story doesn't make sense.

## Prevention

- Make sure the seniors in your life know about this scam. Education is the only way to stop it.
- Seniors should screen their phone calls through an answering machine or caller ID system.
- Never wire money to someone you do not know.
- Report the phone call to local police.
- Establish a secret password with family members so that you are able to verify it is truly a family member calling.
- Before sending money, check out the story. Call the grandchild at home and check with his/her parents.
- Do not post personal information on Facebook or other social media sites and make sure what you post is hidden from public view.